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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI MCNS MEETS DEC. 9: ELECTION SECURITY, PRIME MINISTER'S FLIGHT TURNED BACK, ARMED NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH, DETENTION FACILITY INSPECTIONS, BORDER CLOSED TO NON-IRAQI ARABS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ZALMAY KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4 (a), (b), (d).

1. (C//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: The Iraqi Ministerial Committee for National Security (MCNS) met the afternoon of December 9, 2005 at Prime Minister Ja'afari's residence. Ja'afari expressed extreme consternation about the fact that his flight back to Baghdad from Japan was denied permission to land upon his return. GEN Casey explained the circumstances and acknowledged procedural shortcomings with regard to communications between the PM's security team and MNF-I authorities that will be addressed. It was agreed that: the security plan in place for the election is adequate; all necessary steps have been taken to provide for the security of voters on election day; and the plan should be implemented as designed. Ambassador urged the Iraqis to lift immediately a recent ban imposed on the entry into Iraq of non-Iraqi Arabs, thus allowing Arab journalists, NGO workers, and attorneys and staff for the Saddam trial to enter the country. Ja'afari ordered immediate action to alter the entry ban. Ambassador and GEN Casey also pressed the Iraqis yet again to make good on their promise to deliver reconstruction funds to Fallujah and other post-battle cities. Ja'afari requested additional security at the water purification plant in Taramina, and GEN Casey said he would examine the situation at that location to determine appropriate additional support. National Security Advisor Rubaie tried to obtain concurrence for a plan to arm "night guards" and make them an additional part of the security forces. Ambassador, GEN Casey, and Minister of Defense Dulime declined to endorse this plan, stating that it is inappropriate at this time. GEN Casey reported that the committee formed by the PM to investigate detention facilities had made its first inspection, noting that the conditions discovered were not good. Ja'afari expressed concern that only one facility has been inspected to date and urged that the process be accelerated. He also directed that the inmates found at the facility bearing signs of torture be added to Deputy Prime Minister Rowsch Shaways' investigation of the "Bunker" incident. One item on the agenda that was not discussed was the status of the joint agreement to transfer security responsibility. END SUMMARY.

2. (C//REL GBR AUS) Prime Minister Ja'afari convened a meeting of the MCNS at his residence on December 9, 2005. The Iraqi members present were Ja'afari, Minister of Defense Saadoun Dulime, and National Security Advisor Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubaie. Minister of Interior Baqir Jabr and Minister of State for National Security Affairs Karim al-Anzi were absent. For the Coalition, Ambassador and GEN Casey attended. British Ambassador Patey was not present. The Prime Minister's Chief of Staff Dr. Abdul Aziz al-Tamimi, Senior Advisor Adnan Ali, and Military Advisor MG Talib al-Kanini were also present, as was DepPolMilCouns.

PRIME MINISTER'S PLANE TURNED AWAY

3. (C//REL GBR AUS) On the night of December 7, Ja'afari was returning to Baghdad from Japan in an Iraqi Airways jet. According to Ja'afari, his aircraft arrived over Baghdad after dark, was denied permission to land, and was directed to return to Kuwait. Ja'afari said that he regretted having to open the meeting with this incident but said that whoever made the decision to deny him permission to land had affronted the sovereignty of Iraq and harmed the relationship between Iraq and the United States. Ja'afari said it was unacceptable that the Prime Minister of Iraq would be denied permission to land in Baghdad and that, if he had been the only passenger on the plane, he would have ordered it to land despite the directive from the controller. "We are working hard with you to

develop a relationship with the United States. Imagine what our enemies would do with this if they were to discover that U.S. authorities denied permission to the Iraqi Prime Minister to land in Baghdad." Ja'afari said he knew that the officer who made the decision to deny him permission to land did not represent GEN Casey or the Ambassador, and he demanded that the officer responsible for this decision be brought to his office to explain himself in person.

14. (C//REL GBR AUS) GEN Casey agreed that the incident was unacceptable and offered his apology and assurance that it was not meant as a sign of disrespect to the Prime Minister or to Iraq. He explained that the PM's flight had been delayed by weather and then arrived in Baghdad after dark. The airport's runway lights are not certified for night landings by commercial aircraft, and an advance waiver is required to make an exception to this rule. He pointed out that the PM's flight had not been denied permission to land but had returned to Kuwait on its own as the night waiver was being processed. GEN Casey acknowledged that there had been poor coordination between the PM's security staff and MNF-I and said he had directed the general in command of Strategic Operations to work with Ja'afari's staff to assure better coordination on future air movements by the PM. Ja'afari seemed mollified by this response.

PRE-ELECTION SECURITY BRIEFING

15. (C//REL GBR AUS) Ja'afari asked for an update on the security situation in the lead up to next week's election. GEN Casey reported that he has completed a series of trips around the country to speak with Coalition and Iraqi division commanders, local governors, and Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq officials about election preparations. All reported that they are satisfied with the election plans and confident of their ability to carry them out. The governors he spoke to predicted that levels of violence until the election will be low to moderate, although GEN Casey believes we will see a surge in attacks as the election nears. The most dangerous time will be the next few days until the election emergency measures are imposed. GEN Casey also predicted that attacks on election day will exceed those of the October 15 referendum but will be less than during January's election.

16. (C//REL GBR AUS) Ja'afari asked about the borders. GEN Casey reminded him that on November 30 a ceremony to mark the restoration of Iraqi control over its borders had been held in Husaybah and that, since military operations commenced in the Western Euphrates River Valley in October, the number of suicide bombings in Iraq had been cut in half. Ja'afari then asked if there is anything else that we should be doing to provide security for the elections. GEN Casey responded that pre-election operations are coming to an end and that we now must follow the plan, as to make last minute changes or adjustments would cause the plan to become unhinged. He asked if the emergency measures had been approved and was answered by Tamimi in the affirmative.

17. (C//REL GBR AUS) Minister of Defense Dulime agreed that the plan is well conceived but said he remains concerned about Anbar and Diyala provinces. He also noted that the Muslim Scholars Association had called for a boycott of the Election, and he is uncertain what effect this would have. There was discussion about whether the provisions of the anti-terrorism laws that prohibit incitement against the political process should be more strictly enforced, but the Ambassador asserted that one needs to be very careful about arresting people based on press reports of what they have said, as such a move would be inimical to freedom of speech. Dr. Rubaie opined that there is a gap emerging between the Takfiris and the Saddamists/rejectionists about what approach to take with regard to the elections. The hard-core foreign fighters and their religiously extreme colleagues will continue to attack the election process, while the Saddamists will wait to see the results of the election before deciding on how to proceed. Rubaie said he hopes that after the election it will be said that December 15 was the day the insurgency ended (although he acknowledged that the extremists will fight on).

18. (C//REL GBR AUS) GEN Casey suggested the need for a last minute publicity drive to get as many people as possible to the polls. He suggested that the leaders of all the major political parties make a joint call to vote along with a call for the renunciation of violence. Ja'afari agreed that this is a good idea and directed that a television event involving the leaders of the major political factions be organized. Each leader would have one minute to call on all Iraqis to renounce violence and vote for the future of Iraq. This would not be a political debate but rather a call for national unity.

BAN ON NON-IRAQI ARABS

19. (C//REL GBR AUS) Ambassador stressed the need to immediately lift or alter the ban imposed on the entry into the country of all non-Iraqi Arabs. He pointed out that there are a number of categories of people that include non-Iraqi Arabs who must be admitted into the country to advance its interests. These include journalists, not only from Arab media outlets, but also Arab employees of U.S. and other Western media concerns. It is critical that they be permitted to cover the elections. Second, members of international organizations and non-governmental organizations involved with the election or other issues critical to the progress of Iraq also must be allowed to enter the country. Finally, attorneys and other staff members involved in the Saddam Hussein trial are being prevented from entering the country by this ban. The Ambassador reported that Minister Jabr had told him he would amend the order to make exceptions. This needs to be done immediately, stressed the Ambassador. Waiting for a written order to wend its way through the bureaucracy will take too long. Ja'afari concurred that the people the Ambassador mentioned should be encouraged to come to Iraq, not kept out, and he directed that Jabr be instructed to amend his order immediately.

POST-BATTLE RECONSTRUCTION FUNDS

110. (C//REL GBR AUS) The Ambassador suggested that before the election, Ja'afari should visit Fallujah to announce that funding for continued reconstruction has been made available. However, some of this money must begin to flow prior to his visit. This led to a discussion as to the status of reconstruction funding for a number of other post-battle cities. As usual, Adnan Ali offered up excuses about the Ministry of Finance waiting for adequate spending plans and about internecine rivalries between the involved ministries over which was responsible for what aspect of the reconstruction projects.

REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL SECURITY AT WATER PLANT

111. (C//REL GBR AUS) Ja'afari requested that a battalion of soldiers backed up by a tank company be posted at the Taramina water purification plant to provide additional security. GEN Casey replied that he will check on the situation at that location, and if additional security is required he will make the appropriate arrangements.

ARMED "NIGHT GUARDS"

112. (C//REL GBR AUS) NSA Rubaie presented a document outlining a plan to establish and arm local "night guards" who would provide security in their own neighborhoods. He explained that Ja'afari had been apprehensive about this plan because he thought it might lead to the creation of additional armed militias but that the plan as outlined would protect against this by placing these personnel under the control of the Ministry of Interior (MOI). He also said that, although GEN Casey had opposed the arming of these groups with AK-47s, Casey had not been opposed to the issuance of pistols. GEN Casey adamantly rejected this characterization and reiterated his earlier opposition to any plan that calls for the creation of armed neighborhood watches or night guards. The last thing Iraq needs now are more guns in the hands of more people. On

the contrary, Iraq needs to reduce the number of people with access to guns until only the lawfully-constituted security forces are armed.

13. (C//REL GBR AUS) Rubaie argued that such an organization existed before, still legally exists as it was not disbanded by the Coalition Provisional Authority, and would be made up of young men who would be under the control of the MOI, rather than fighting against them with a militia. In addition, he compared them favorably to the Desert Protectors, arguing that, as people defending their own community, they know better than anyone else who is a criminal or an outsider intent on causing trouble. Minister Dulime concurred with GEN Casey and Ambassador that it would be a bad idea to arm more men in Baghdad, where it is already difficult enough for Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces to distinguish friend from foe. Ambassador and GEN Casey said they had not seen the paper Rubaie was presenting and would need to study this concept further. That said, they also reiterated that they remained opposed to arming night guards with anything other than cell phones with which they can call the police.

INSPECTIONS OF DETENTION FACILITIES

14. (C//REL GBR AUS) GEN Casey reported that on December 8 the committee formed by the PM to investigate the conditions at detention facilities throughout Iraq made its first inspection. The findings of the inspection (reported SEPTEL) were troubling. Over 600 inmates were found in crowded and unclean conditions. At least 13 of them showed signs of torture or abuse and required medical treatment. A report of the findings will be available in a few days. Ja'afari was upset to hear of this. He directed that any inmates that showed signs of torture be incorporated into the investigation being conducted by Deputy Prime Minister Rowsch Shaways into the "Bunker" incident. He also was angry that the committee has only made one inspection since its inception, and he urged that inspections be stepped up. He said it is not acceptable to him that two weeks into this process only one facility has been inspected.
KHALILZAD